

AMENDMENT UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.111
U.S. APPLN. NO. 09/855,496
ATTORNEY DOCKET NO Q64375

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Patent Office for acknowledging Applicants' claim to foreign priority, and for indicating that the certified copy of the priority document, European Patent Application No. 00401370.2 dated May 17, 2000, has been made of record in the file.

Applicants thank the Patent Office for initialing the references listed on the PTO-1449 form submitted with the Information Disclosure Statement filed on May 16, 2001, thereby confirming that the listed references have been considered.

Claims 1-13 have been examined on their merits.

The Patent Office objects to claims 4-7 and 9-13 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim. Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 4-7 and 9-13 would be allowed if rewritten in independent form. Applicants herein cancel claims 3 and 4, and add their respective recitations to claim 1. The dependency of claims 5 and 6 has been amended so that claims 5 and 6 now depend from claim 1.

Applicants herein editorially amend claims 2 and 5-13 to remove awkward language, reference callouts and grammatical errors. Claim 12 is amended to depend from claim 8, instead of claim 9. The amendments to claims 2 and 5-13 were made merely to more accurately claim the present invention, were not made for reasons of patentability, do not narrow the literal scope of the claims and thus do not implicate an estoppel in the application of the doctrine of equivalents. The amendments to claims 2 and 5-13 do not add any new matter.

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Applicants herein add new claims 14-20. The new claims 14-20 are fully supported by the originally filed specification, and do not add any new matter. Entry and consideration of the new claims 14-20 is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 2 and 5-20 are all the claims presently pending in the application.

1. Claims 1, 2 and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Piesinger (U.S. Patent No. 4,726,039). Applicants traverse the rejection of claims 1, 2 and 8 for at least the reasons discussed below.

Applicants have amended claim 1 with the recitations of claims 3 and 4, and submit that claim 1 is now allowable over Piesinger. Applicants respectfully request that the § 102(b) rejection of claims 1, 2 and 8 be withdrawn.

With respect to new independent claim 14, Applicants submit that claim 14 is allowable for at least reasons analogous to those stated by the Patent Office in the Allowable Subject Matter section of the August 13, 2004 Non-Final Office Action. Applicants submit that claim 14 is allowable, and further submit that new claims 15-20 are allowable as well, at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 14.

2. Claim 3 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Piesinger in view of Persico (U.S. Patent No. 5,574,755). The rejection of claim 3 is now moot due to its cancellation.

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With respect to new independent claim 14, Applicants submit that claim 14 is allowable for at least reasons analogous to those stated by the Patent Office in the Allowable Subject Matter section of the August 13, 2004 Non-Final Office Action. Applicants submit that claim 14 is allowable, and further submit that new claims 15-20 are allowable as well, at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 14.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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WASHINGTON OFFICE

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